DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 064 480 VT 015 551

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TITLE Career Education.
SPONS AGENCY Ohio State Univ., Columbus. Center for Vocational and Technical Education.
PUB DATE Sep 71
NOTE 18p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS Adult Education; *Career Education; Concept Teaching; *Developmental Programs; *Educational Change; Educational Programs; *Educational Responsibility; Elementary Grades; Individual Needs; Integrated Curriculum; *Learning Characteristics; Program Design; Secondary Grades

ABSTRACT

Five factors have influenced the movement in the United States now described as career education. Vocational educators might contend that this is another stage in the developmental history of vocational education, while others say that it is a natural consequence of concomitant advances in education. Another influence was work done by the National Advisory Council on Vocational Education. Career education movements in Europe and the Soviet Union influenced the scene world-wide, and a fifth explanation credits the United States Office of Education and State Education Agencies with strong leadership. Various approaches to career education focus on: (1) the philosophical commitment, (2) the essential components, (3) utilization of an educational delivery system, (4) education levels from the elementary grades through adult education, and (5) a program which is concerned with outcomes. In the school-based model, career education needs to be integrated into the entire school curriculum rather than to be a separate course. Characteristics of schools with exemplary school-based programs, assumptions which mitigate the influence of career education, problems for implementation, and developmental needs are discussed. (GEB)

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CAREER EDUCATION

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OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

SEPTEMBER, 1971

VT 015 551

CAREER EDUCATION

Introduction

This paper addresses itself to the concept of Career Education as it has evolved and culminated in several efforts toward implementation. Its primary focus will be toward school-based implementation as embraced by the U. S. Office of Education, but the examination of the concept will embrace other types of implementation.

This paper will not begin with a definition of "Career Education". At present, "Career Education" is merely a label for evolving concepts and the concepts are as elusive as the label. Career Education has been endorsed by many groups of educators whose endorsement is based on numerous caveats related to interpretation. A curious phenomenon in education is that professionals are often more loyal to labels than to the ideas presumably implied by them. The concept of Career Education is now in the process of being defined to accomodate proprietary interests among and within various groups; an effort to find an acceptable definition is often an exercise in arriving at a tolerable level of generality.

This paper will address itself to the following general topics:

(a) The emergence of the concept of career education

(b) Approaches to describing or defining career education

(c) Unique and essential elements of school-based career education

(d) Characteristics of schools with exemplary programs

(e) Educational assumptions which mitigate the influence of career education

(f) Problems of implementation

(g) Development needs

Career Education - The Emergence of a Concept

The emergence of a concept of Career Education raises the question of antecedents. What stimuli gave rise to the acceptability of educational goals oriented to careers and career choice? Is Career Education another fashion or fad which will soon fall by the wayside? Is Career Education another in a series of educational gimmicks whose purpose is to serve bureaucratic or proprietory interests rather than educational goals? Are the antecedents of Career Education durable or fragile?

Vocational educators would contend that Career Education is another stage in the developmental history of Vocational Education. Beginning with Franklin's Academy, Career Education became rooted in the American educational enterprise, at least until the Academy gave way to the domination of colleges. Toward the end of the 19th century the concept of career-related education continued to emerge as industrial workers began to clamor for a larger share of the public educational goods.[1] The meager but important gains included an expansion of public secondary education as well as the passage of the Morrill Act whose amendments were clearly vocational and career oriented. In due course the Morrill legislation, too, gave way to dominant influences in higher education. Subsequent state and federal vocational legislation from 1906 to 1968 embraced more occupations, a greater age span of students and an interpretation of Vocational Education which included career choice, job training,and long-range planning to accommodate broader definitions of Career Education.

Other advocates would contend that Career Education now emerges as a natural consequence of concomitant advances in education's "state of the art". Advances in knowledge related to the developmental stages of children, the role of task-analysis in learning and the psychology of careers - all of these converge, it is argued, to provide a conceptual base for Career Education which did not exist previously.[2]

A third influence arose from the work of the National Advisory Council on Vocational Education. In a series of short, pungent and penetrating reports, the Advisory Council assumed a role which was both diagnostic and prescriptive. Their recommendations demanded a response. The third report, issued in July, 1970, called for a complete reform of the educational system to include Career Education, and it identified some essential elements of a career-oriented educational system.[3]

A fourth influence arose from the world-wide scene. Career Education, it is contended, is a pervasive international movement whose conceptual base is still not clear, but whose impact is being felt as strongly as the widespread phenomena of student activism and peasant revolts. The Career Education movement in Europe began in Sweden, the hotbed of European educational reform. Legislation in 1967 reformed the entire system and provided an exemplary pattern for the region.[4] The USSR established a comprehensive career development system in 1969 with elements which are home, school, and industry based. With assistance from UNICEF, the USSR sponsored an international invitational seminar on Career Education in October, 1970.[5]

A fifth explanation credits the U. S. Office of Education and State Education Agencies with strong leadership in identifying a defensible conceptual base for Career Education and encouraging implementation through grants for exemplary projects and further innovation.

As seen through the five influences described above, the movement now described as Career Education has a background of evolving concepts and numerous reinforcing elements. It is thoroughly imbedded in the developmental pattern of Vocational Education. It is not necessarily dependent upon the transitory nature of gimmick labels and fragile slogans. In a sense, it is reactionary; it reacts against an educational system

which affords itself the luxury of an orientation toward status rather than an orientation toward tasks and it appeals for a repair of the disabling effects of the former to an economy. Most important, the concept has begun to develop its own momentum as a dynamic force. It is, however, still incomplete. The problems of implementation are still enormous and largely unsolved. These await further commitment and further action.

Approaches to Describing or Defining Career Education

In the introduction to this paper, a deliberate decision was taken not to begin with a definition of Career Education. Yet the concept can be described, and perhaps defined, by discussing the various approaches to explicating the concept. It is the purpose of this section to examine the various approaches to describing the concept.

Career Education may be described as a philosophical commitment by the enterprise of public education to the values of a work-oriented society. These values are implemented through the instructive functions of the school by introducing career relevance into all instruction, by focusing on the decision functions of career choice at all grade levels and by providing occupational preparation to job-entry level for all school leavers or graduates.

A second approach is one of describing a set of essential components required for a functioning Career Education program. These components are as follows:

(a) A Curriculum and instruction component in the academic curriculum which provides occupational relevance and career identification to all academic instruction in all grades,

(b) Vocational skill training up to job-entry levels in occupations chosen by students,

(c) Supplementary instruction to include observation, work-study and work-experience in selected occupations within the community,

(d) Specific instructional programs permitting students to develop awareness of self in relationship to careers and an opportunity to pursue exploratory and orientation activities in a number of occupations,

(e) A planned program of relating the instructional program to the community and its occupational structure, and

(f) A follow-up program which obligates the school to engage in placement and to improve the Career Education program through evaluation and feedback.

Career Education may be described, thirdly, as the utilization of an educational delivery system. This approach has the elements of clean and tidy accountability. The delivery system accomodates all of the resources available to the educative function - the time of students, the time of faculty, the materials (including the curriculum), the equipment and space in the school. The Career Education program utilizes all of these resources in varying amounts and with varying degrees of effectiveness. The delivery system may focus largely on guidance services, in-school instructional modes, or on field-trips and community activities. The delivery system for Career Education is the motion element of the program as viewed in its day-to-day operation. An important aspect is the curriculum and its orientation to the purposes of career goals. The delivery system is an important way to view any function of the school.

A fourth approach to the description of Career Education focuses on educational levels beginning with the elementary level and concluding with adult and continuing education. Each level has specific educational objectives and each contributes as a subsystem to the cumulating outcomes of the total system. Ordinarily the emphasis of Career Education at the elementary level involves educational objectives related to occupational awareness and career orientation. The middle level embraces educational objectives related to career exploration. The senior high school provides the opportunity to further exercise the options derived from previous levels

including job-entry, further job preparation and/or other types of further education. A final level is adult and continuing education with objectives related to upgrading, updating,and retraining of those individuals holding jobs or preparing to change jobs.

A fifth approach to the description of Career Education is concerned with outcomes. It describes Career Education in terms of the qualifications of individuals who exit from the program, the congruency between qualifications and occupational or further education performance and, finally, the effectiveness of each level of Career Education contributing to objectives which are cummulative.

No single approach to the description or definition of Career Education is complete or adequate. All of the approaches mentioned above are mutually reinforcing. Unfortunately, schools are not always organized to permit a smooth flow of students from one level to the next nor do all students complete their education within a single educational jurisdiction. Career Education is cumulative and programmatic, it is not discrete and episodic. Schools whose structure or location does not easily accommodate Career Education will need the variety of approaches in order to add strength where needed in order to minimize the effect of gaps or weaknesses which may exist.

Finally, and most importantly, it should be emphasized that the word career in Career Education is grammatically and conceptually an adjective. Career Education is not synonymous with education; it is a special kind of education which affords parity of esteem to the values of work. It accepts work as an activity which rations the goods, services, and satisfactions available to mankind and its central feature, thus, is its endeavor to insure that all instruction includes occupational relevance and that all students may aquire job-entry skills in a career cluster of his choosing.

Unique and Essential Elements of the School Based Model

Adding to the complexity of Career Education, and specifically to the definition and the implementation of the school-based approach, are a series of essential elements or conditions. Without these elements or conditions, the Career Education emphasis can easily become an exercise in rhetoric or a mere expression of hope. Accordingly, these conditions should become measures of process and benchmarks for evaluation.

Transcending the entire career development emphasis is the important role of decision-making for career choice. Traditionally, teachers have urged students to keep their options open and to delay a choice of career as long as possbile. Schools have been organized to minimize the opportunity for occupational choices except as delayed compromises after other options are diminished. Vocational preparation, for example, has been advanced along the educational time-line so that much of the institutional growth has been at the post-high school level. Career Education reverses the tendency to delay career choice. One of its essential features is the opportunity for students to engage themselves in decision alternatives in the early grades. This advancement of the decision context is not done to insure an earlier decision of an ultimate career choice. It is done to enable the student to employ career decision-making as an instructive aspect of his own growth and development and to insure that career choice can accomodate a rationale if undertaken soon enough but only a rationalization if delayed too long.

The introduction of career decision-making in the early grades adds numerous implications for instruction. Decision making implies alternative choices and the opportunity to reject as well as accept alternatives. The evidence that decisions have been made is not only the existence of a career choice; it is also the evidence that alternatives have been rejected.

Whether accepted or rejected, career choices may be instrumental: they may exist as platforms or points of vantage from which to explore further decisions. The implications for instruction include
the need to illuminate many career options and the need to understand the instructive function of decision-making.

As an instructional concept, career decision-making is not well-researched. Unlike the concepts of mastery or achievement, it does not have interchangeable parts which can be adjusted and fitted as students move from one school to another. Career decision-making is thought to be a cumulative phenomenon which results from a growing awareness of self and a growing awareness of career options. The instructional implications of this is not yet clear.

Another essential element of the school-based model is the need to integrate Career Education into the entire school curriculum, into science, reading, mathematics, and into every subject of the school. Career Education, it is proposed, will become the vehicle for carrying the load without diminishing the educational objectives of academic subjects. In return the academic subjects will serve as vehicles for providing occupational relevance and clarified decision options within the total curriculum of the school. This integration of Career Education into the total curriculum reduces the need to rely solely upon separate courses entitled "Career Education" or upon guidance services as the only delivery system for Career Education. Again, it is not clear how this curriculum integration may be accomplished or how its outcomes may be evaluated. It is essential, nevertheless, as a demonstration of the commitment of the school to the concept of Career Education and to the objectives which illuminate and facilitate career choice.

A third essential element is the adoption of some orderly system for

comprehending the enormous number of occupations which may be examined in the process of accepting, rejecting, or otherwise considering an occupational choice. One of the ways to do this would be to move methodically and analytically through the Dictionary of Occupational Titles. Most would agree that such an approach would be dull and tedious. Another approach would be to examine career clusters or families of occupations in which there are a sufficient number of common elements to warrant being studied as a group of occupations. This approach has demonstrated its usefulness in Career Education. It permits a comparative view of occupational clusters and it allows students to start by examining the broad characteristics of various occupational families and to conclude with an intensive study of the job-entry requirements of a single occupation. Such an operational approach to the study of occupational clusters is essential to a program of Career Education. The occupational clusters commonly found in Career Education programs are the following:

Business and Office Occupations
Marketing and Distribution Occupations
Communication and Media Occupations
Construction Occupations
Manufacturing Occupations
Transportation Occupations
Agri-Business and Natural Resource Occupations
Marine Science Occupations
Environmental Central Occupations
Public Services Occupations
Hospitality and Recreation Occupations
Personal Services Occupations
Fine Arts and Humanities Occupations
Consumer and Homemaking Occupations

A fourth essential element in school-based Career Education is instruction for occupational proficiency to the job-entry level. This requires an expansion of vocational offerings in almost every school. The only alternative to this expansion is an exercise in colossal deception - of the students and the community. If schools attempt to expand Career

Education programs without an expansion of their vocational offerings, students will be denied the opportunity for Career Education to lead toward career development. Nor is it sufficient for schools to rely on the job-entry skills available solely through work experience and cooperative programs. Such an approach would restrict students in Career Education programs to the least remunerative jobs in the occupational structure and to a very limited spectrum of career choice. Work experience, cooperative education, and vocational guidance may supplement the needed preparation in job-entry skills but they cannot serve as a substitute. Minimum job-entry training programs should include the opportunity to make occupational choices and to receive specific skill training in occupations contained within any one of the 15 occupational clusters identified by the U. S. Office of Education. Anything less than this minimum would not measure up to a complete program of Career Education.

As important and as essential as any characteristic of Career Education is its important linkage with the community. This linkage is so important and so essential that Career Education cannot exist without it. School-based Career Education can actually be closer to the community than employer or home-based Career Education. Linkages include advisory committees for each career cluster and school-community cooperative relationships with goals which include a development of the community environment as an instructive environment for career growth.

There are other essential and unique elements of school-based Career Education such as its applicability to all students and the obligation of the school to engage in placement and follow-up activities. These additional elements can be accommodated rather easily in most school systems.

Characteristics of Schools With Exemplary School-based Programs

Sooner or later it is necessary to turn attention from educational concepts to the operation of educational programs. If Career Education is a durable concept, its durability must be demonstrated in educational settings. How do schools prepare themselves for this? What are the characteristics of schools which are prepared to implement Career Education? Exemplary programs are in existence in many places. Following are some of the school characteristics regarded as important to Career Education:

(a) Faculty and administration acceptance of the concept of Career Education is an obvious need. This is demonstrated by a willingness to:

1. involve <u>all</u> students in Career Education,
2. make Career Education an integral part of the total curriculum,
3. accommodate work-experience, part-time employment,and work study as a part of the curriculum,
4. encourage the return of drop-outs into special programs and job preparation,
5. establish a close relationship with the community and its values related to the work ethic, and to
6. engage in inservice training as necessary to increase the career education capability of faculty.

(b) A high research and development capability:

Exemplary schools should be active in creating curriculum materials for Career Education and alert to the possibility of utilizing materials created elsewhere. The faculty should be active in experimenting with different approaches to instruction and the school should be perceptive and penetrating in its approach to evaluation.

(c) A willingness to reclaim its casualties including its drop-outs, unemployed graduates and college drop-outs. The reclaiming of casualties includes the need to concentrate on programs of prevention and a continous concern for placement.

(d) An expanded program of vocational offerings available within career clusters to all students at all levels including those in adult or continuing education.

(e) A willingness to make adjustment in the organization and structure of the school in order to accommodate Career Education. Some schools are not organized or equipped to provide Career Education. They will need to rely on services available from intermediate districts or on similar types of area-wide service. Other schools will need to reorganize schedules and calendars. Adjustments in organization and structure will be a characteristic of almost every school with exemplary Career Education.

Educational Assumptions Which Mitigate the Influence of Career Education

Even under the most desirable or exemplary circumstances, Career Education is likely to win its way slowly into general educational practice. Certain conventions have captured institutionalized forms of education and have mitigated the impact of such programs as Career Education.

One is the insistent preoccupation of educators with individual behavior and the neglect of concern for group behavior or with variation among groups. One of the most important research findings of the last decade was the discovery that education is not culturally irrelevant; that there are observable differences from subculture to subculture.[6] Yet this discovery has not resulted in any improvements in the approaches to educating groups in conditions of obvious disadvantage. Could it be that we are educationally influenced too strongly by a Judeo-Christian heritage wherein salvation is available to an individual but not to a group? Is it possible that education is best organized when it can focus only on competitive individual achievement?

Competitive values often become instilled by motives which have little to do with the instructional functions of the school. Individual academic achievement is the pathway to further education, status, and to social mobility. It is a system which places much emphasis on the relative value of individuals. What is less obvious and less understood is that this same system cannot avoid ascribing relative values to groups! Most particularly it ascribes a hierarchical value system to occupational groups. If the ascribed value is low, it is most difficult to encourage students to consider the occupation as a career option.

The educative process begins in individuals at the moment of birth. The sole purpose of the educative process at this early stage is to initiate communication and to link the identity of the child with the family as a group.

The separation of identity begins in the school. By the time the child reaches the middle school, the entire system becomes rigorously competitive. Here the individual variations in intelligence become known but the school does very little except to measure them. Often the result is the segregation of the clever and the dull just as society segregates its criminals. Competitive values are instilled which suggest to students that schools are most concerned with the elimination of the unworthy and, alternatively, to stimulation of those whose worthiness is a highly individualized achievement.

Most communities provide a great many opportunities for an individual to merge his identity with a group. School drop-outs are ~~most~~ often drop-ins; they opt out of the insecure environment requiring individual competition and they drop-in to some group wherein membership does not dispossess them of the feeling of security. The family, firm, church, the trade union, and the neighborhood gang - all of these provide individuals an opportunity to submerge his "I" into a collective "we" and gain more confidence in doing so. Paradoxically, a great deal of educational effort appears aimed in the opposite direction. Group guidance is avoided, for example, if time is available for individual guidance. Career Education may introduce occupationally based group identity into school systems where individual identity is the prevailing mode. It may be a difficult accommodation.

A second assumption which may mitigate the influence of Career Education is related to the assumed demise of the work ethic. The increase of leisure, it is claimed, will diminish the importance of the work ethic. Yet, it is almost impossible to describe leisure time. It is not time used to rest, vacation, sleep, or relax. All of these are preparatory to work. If it is none of these, what is it? Who has it? It is likely that the importance of the work ethic has nothing to do with the amount or the utilization of leisure

time. Unemployment, it is agreed, is not a maldistribution of leisure. The assumption remains, however, that the work ethic will be diminished, somehow, by increased leisure time.[7]

Problems for Implementing Career Education

The problems of implementing Career Education on a nationwide basis are numerous and complex. The first, and perhaps the most obvious problem is school size. Career Education is most easily implemented in large school systems and most difficult in small districts. More than half of the school districts in the United States are in jurisdictions whose populations are less than 50,000 persons. School districts with such limited enrollments have difficulty finding opportunities for a wide range of work experience and additional difficulties in obtaining coverage in all of the occupational clusters. Adaptations are possible as mentioned previously in this paper, but implementation will be difficult, nevertheless, for most schools.

The probelms of implementing Career Education at the elementary level and in the middle school are likely to be most perplexing. The concept of careers is remote for elementary school children and a curricular emphasis on career decisions is subject to superficiality. The development of meaning on the experience level of elementary school children is a specialized skill not possessed by many who advocate Career Education at this level. Moreover, the school-based model of Career Education includes the presumption that elementary school children will move inductively through all of the career clusters by the time they reach the 6th grade. This may be an impossible expectation or it may involve more developmental effort than has been contemplated.

The middle school has special problems of implementation - problems related to the Career Education model, to the school itself, and to students

at this level. The school based model literally pivots on the middle school. Instruction in Career Education begins at the kindergarten level and extends through grade six with emphasis on career awareness. During the middle school years, the students begin a series of career choices. The middle school is thus a pivot point for the entire program. From this point onward, the decision choices are expected to narrow and interest is expected to intensify. Unless a good job of implementation is done at the middle-school level, the entire program is weakened.

Implementation also encounters the problem of expanding vocational offerings in areas where vocational personnel are not now available. Teacher education institutions have not had lead-time to prepare teachers nor are they well prepared to offer inservice training. Implementation of the cluster concept requires trained personnel and, at least for the present, the supply is meager and the flow is almost non-existent.

Perhaps the most serious problem in implementation can be described as a need for guidelines which permit local education agencies to plan a smooth and orderly entrance into career development programs and a way of anticipating the costs of doing so. Such guidelines might propose organizational and structural alternatives available to schools, personnel requirements for installing and implementing programs, space and equipment requirements for various program components and the degree to which Career Education may develop interchangeable parts for use within or among local education agencies. The need is for a guide to sequencing the process of installing a Career Education program. What components should be installed first and which ones can be delayed?

Development Needs

From the very beginning of the focus toward Career Education, development

needs have been underestimated. Thus far, Career Education has been assisted through exemplary grants and small research and development contracts. If the concept of Career Education is to embrace the entire school system, and if Career Education is to be integrated with the total curriculum, a developmental thrust of career development must find its way into every level of education including the university level. It must become a central focus for federal allocations to educational research and a central focus for educational planning. Such a scope for developmental costs has not been contemplated. Meanwhile, the meager resources for Career Education must be mobilized toward providing assistance to states and to local education agencies for planning, staff development, creating instructional materials, and evaluation. Career Education can easily become associated with educational gimmickry and its life can become as tenuous as other slogans which have preceded it. Its durability will depend on the willingness to invest in the needs for development or the willingness to bear the long-run costs of not doing so.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Wirth, Arthur G., The Vocational-Liberal Studies Controversy Between John Dewey and Others, (1900 - 1917), Final Report, Project No. 7-0305, USOE Washington University, St. Louis, Mo., September, 1970, p. 346.

[2]The Argument for a convergence theory advanced by John Coster, Director - Center for Occupational Education, North Carolina State University.

[3]Third Report of the National Advisory Council on Vocational Education, Washington, D.C., July 10, 1970.

[4]Laroplaner For Yrkesutbildningen Samt Vissa Pedogogiska och Methodiska Fragor, Ecklesiastikdepartementet, Stockholm, 1967.

[5]USSR - UNICEF Seminar on Pre-Vocational Training, Education, and Vocational Orientation Within and Outside Schools, Moscow, October 12-31, 1970. (29 working papers)

[6]This conclusion was highlighted in the work of James Coleman in studies surrounding his work on equality of educational opportunity.

[7]Smith, Timothy L., Work and Human Worth, Congressional Record, House of Representatives, Vol. 113, No. 147, September 19, 1967.